

What Hard Conversations With Your Teen Sound Like

Certain conversations should be non-negotiable in your house. But when should you have them? And how? The answer may depend on your teen's stage of adolescence.

Tough conversations are just that—tough. As much as your teen may dread the necessary talks that come with adolescence, you have the unique privilege as a parent to speak truth into their life. The best part is, you are not alone. You have God's Word available to help you navigate these important discussions.

While your teen may expect the dreaded birds-and-bees rundown, they may be surprised to hear some other topics that are on your heart. Pray for God's wisdom and gear up because if you don't tell them the truth, someone else will tell them lies.

Young Teens (Ages 13-15)

From even the earliest stage of adolescence, teenagers feel the need to keep up with those around them. Whether it be material things or social status, it's likely your teen doesn't want to be different from his peers at this life stage. Take time to communicate God's plan for your family and what you deem important.

Give your teen clear expectations. While other families might allow a variety of things, focus on what ground rules and expectations will govern your family and ultimately your teen's life moving forward. What will the rules be about curfew, chores etc.? What standards will you live by?

Encourage your teen. Because of the fragile nature of self-esteem at this stage, and their wanting to belong, encourage your teen by showing them what God says about them.

Communicate that their self-worth is not measured by anything other than God's Word.

Discuss with your teen how to guard and protect their heart. Our hearts at any age are delicate and the internal desire to be seen by the opposite sex begins early. Explain the importance of waiting to engage in romantic relationships, and offer the many reasons why.

Middle Teens (Ages 16-17)

Just because your teen has reached a phase in which they now know it all, does not mean you should not talk often about what is most important. Don't feel bad about checking up on your student. Remember God has entrusted your teen to your care and you are accountable before Him for the way in which you instruct them.

Explain the importance of being financially responsible. What things worked for you when trying to be responsible with your money? Pass those tips on to your teen. Help them understand the joy of tithing—an important command given to all Christians, which should be taught at an early age.

Ask real questions about your student's walk with Christ. At a stage in life when your teen may allow several influencers into their decision-making, it's crucial to have God's voice—echoed by yours—be the most important and consistent.

You must talk about social media. Your teen needs to know that anything they put on any social media site is available to all. The things they post can influence their future for years to come. Help your son or daughter live consistently in Christ so that every part of their life reflects that relationship. (Also Read: 5 Issues to Discuss Before Using Social Media)

Older Teens (Ages 18-19)

Your almost-adult has the potential at this stage to have

really meaningful discussions with you. You've likely been through some things over their adolescence that hopefully have helped to mold and shape the relationship you have with them now. Continue the conversations. Be a voice in your teen's life that is valuable and wanted.

Communicate the intense love you have for your teen. While your student may be preparing to leave your home, knowing they are loved unconditionally no matter what, is a truth they need to hide in their hearts. Talk to them about your love. Talk about Christ's love. (Also Read: 3 Ways to Send Your Teen to College)

Discuss how to honor Christ in romantic relationships. With more freedom comes more opportunity to compromise, especially when the heart is involved. Your teen needs to know where you stand, but most importantly, what God's Word says about relationships.

Inspire your teen to be set apart. College ushers in a whole new realm of peer pressure. Your student needs to know that living by God's standards is most important. The reality is that honoring God may require them to make decisions that seem unpopular, weird or like they are missing out on the fun in the moment. But these good decisions will set them up for God's best in their lives, and they'll discover it much sooner than those who stray away from Christ.

Above all else, be honest and transparent as you guide your teen through these tricky years and difficult conversations that will have to happen. Know that when God is honored through your parenting, He is glorified!

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